



Interstate 680

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solutions on sunol

The Alameda County Congestion Management Agency, in partnership with Caltrans, the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, the Contra Costa Transportation Authority and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, is managing Sunol Grade improvements.



On June 29th, the Project Partners gathered to break ground on the southbound I-680 HOV lane. Those in attendance were: Bijan Sartipi, Kendall Kitamura, Art Dao, Frank Furger, Jeff Funk, Bob McCleary, Jim Kellogg, Gus Morrison, Ellen Tauscher, Gary Prost, Liz Figueroa, Scott Haggerty, Gloria Ritchie, Don Reynolds and Moujan Mostaghini.

Progress Abounds on Sunol Grade Traffic Relief Project

The Alameda County Congestion Management Agency (ACCMMA) and its partners are working quickly to relieve traffic on the I-680 Sunol Grade corridor. This corridor jumped from the 28th most congested in 1995 to the second most congested in 1996. The dramatic shift in traffic patterns was attributable to the strong job market in the Silicon Valley and the lack of available housing in the South Bay.

In 1997, a concerted effort by a dedicated group of elected officials, agencies and businesses formed the Solutions on Sunol (SOS) Coalition to address this new problem. It has since become known as one of the fastest “funded to relief” projects in the history of



Dennis Fay, Roberta Cooper, Gus Morrison, Jeff Morales, Ellen Tauscher, Liz Figueroa, Scott Haggerty, Shelia Young and Frank Furger cut the ribbon on March 23rd to officially open the southbound I-680 auxiliary lane.

Caltrans. Within three years the partnership celebrated the opening of a much-needed auxiliary lane, the construction kick-off for the southbound HOV (High Occupancy Vehicle) lane and funding approval for a northbound project. “The key to the success of the entire I-680 Sunol Grade Project has been a unique partnership of business, elected officials and regional transportation agencies working together to

bring relief to the public earlier than previously envisioned,” said Dennis Fay, Executive Director of the ACCMA.

Southbound Auxiliary Lane Complete

Less than a year after the auxiliary lane groundbreaking the Project Partners gathered again in March 2001 to ceremoniously open the new lane.

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Getting More People Over The Grade

In addition to expediting improvements on I-680, the Alameda County Congestion Management Agency continues to support other efforts to relieve congestion on the Sunol Grade including:

The Altamont Commuter Express (ACE)

On March 5, 2001, the ACE added a third roundtrip to its schedule to meet the demands of commuters traveling between Pleasanton and San Jose. The addition helps accommodate the increase of ridership, up 10% this September from last September's figures. Planning ahead, the ACE will collect input from passengers and look more closely at its existing schedule to determine the need for a fourth train which could be operating as early as Spring 2002. For more information on the ACE, please call

I-680 SUNOL GRADE PROJECT SCHEDULE	
IMPROVEMENT	TIMING*
Southbound Phase I — Auxiliary Lane	Complete
Southbound Phase II — Southbound HOV Lane	Under Construction Completion Expected Spring 2002
Southbound Phase III	In Design Phase - Completion Expected Late 2006
Sound Walls	In Design Phase - Completion Expected Summer 2003
Northbound Improvements	
Funding	Complete
Environmental Review	Completion Expected Spring 2003
Design	Projected Completion Summer 2003
Construction	Projected Completion 2006
* The Bay Area is currently at risk of losing its Air Quality conformity status during January 2002. If a "lapse" in conformity occurs, major projects could be delayed and only a limited subset of projects could move forward. If this occurs, The I-680 Sunol Grade improvements schedule could be affected.	

the San Joaquin Regional Rail Commission at (209) 468-5600.

Prime Time Bus Service

Prime Time Bus Service continues providing subscription bus service between the Tri-Valley and Silicon Valley. An

increasing number of riders are enjoying the coaches that feature comfortable reclining seats, individual reading lights and overhead racks for storage. For more information on Prime Time Bus Service or to reserve your space, please call LAVTA at (925) 455-7555. ■

Progress Abounds — continued

Located between Auto Mall Parkway and Mission Blvd. South on southbound I-680, the auxiliary lane has provided immediate results with improved traffic flow, reduced back-ups and enhanced safety.

Southbound HOV Lane Under Construction

The Project Partners broke ground on June 29th to commemorate the second phase in the series of improvements. This phase includes the addition of a 14-mile HOV lane along southbound I-680 between Highway 84 and Highway 237. I-680 will be widened from three lanes to four, increasing mobility on the freeway while also

providing an incentive for commuters to rideshare and carpool. The improvements are expected to reduce delays by up to 20 minutes during peak commute hours for carpoolers and peak congestion is expected to be reduced from five hours to one hour per day. During non-commute hours, the lane will be open to all vehicles. The new lane is expected to be open to traffic in the late spring of 2002.

Sound Walls Moving Ahead

Resident requests at previous public meetings to fast track sound wall construction has resulted in an effort to expedite sound wall completion on I-680 sooner than originally planned.

The design of the sound walls is now approximately 35% complete and construction is expected to begin in the fall of 2002. This will bring sound walls to specified areas along the route years earlier than anticipated. Individuals interested in the sound wall project are encouraged to attend one of the two public open house meetings being held in November. The first will be held on November 13th from 5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. at the Milpitas Community Center on 457 E. Calaveras Blvd., Milpitas. The second will be held on November 15th from 5:00 p.m. – 8:00 pm. at the Fremont Christian Life Centre on 2450 Durham Rd., Fremont. ■

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Design-Sequencing Speeds Project

The southbound HOV lane on I-680 is one of twelve projects included in a “design-sequencing” pilot program being conducted by Caltrans. James Kellogg, an East Bay representative on the California Transportation Commission, nominated the new southbound lane for inclusion in the pilot program. After learning that Sunol was chosen to be a part of the design-sequencing program, Commissioner Kellogg stated, “That is great! This alone will shave off another

year from the time it will take to bring the improvements to the commuter – and that is what it is all about – providing relief quicker than we have in the past.”

Design-sequencing allows Caltrans to award a construction contract before the design plans are fully complete. If proven to save costs and accelerate the delivery of projects, design-sequencing may become a more common method used to expedite freeway construction. ■



James W. Kellogg
Commissioner, California Transportation Commission

Northbound Improvements Closer To Reality

While commuters are already beginning to enjoy the benefits of the southbound improvements, the commute back home on northbound I-680 needs similar improvements. Heavy congestion persists northbound between the hours of 3:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

The successful approach used by the partners for the southbound project has led to expedited funding for northbound improvements. Last year, Governor Gray Davis allocated \$60 million for improvements from the Traffic Congestion Relief Program with an additional \$42 million previously allocated by the California Transportation Commission and the California Department of Transportation out of the Interregional Transportation Improvement Program.

As soon as funding was secured, Caltrans initiated the environmental studies that must be completed before design and construction can begin. Three alternatives are being considered in the Environmental document for northbound improvements.

Alternative I includes the addition of a northbound High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) or “carpool” lane, a number of auxiliary lanes to facilitate traffic flowing off and on the freeway between selected interchanges, the widening of specified on-ramps and ramp metering.

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Value Pricing Study Underway

In recent years, a number of express lanes have been constructed in California and throughout the United States. Like traditional HOV or “carpool” lanes, express lanes provide carpoolers with a lane dedicated for their use. However, express lanes go further by selling the excess capacity in the carpool lane to single occupancy drivers for a fee.

The ACCMA is initiating a value pricing study to evaluate if an express lane would be beneficial on the Sunol Grade corridor. The study will evaluate opportunities and constraints in the I-680 corridor in terms of: physical features, travel patterns, level of service including duration of congestion, mix of vehicle type, vehicle occupancy, and transit availability and use, etc. In addition, the study will analyze a range of strategies including utilizing a movable barrier and various pricing options as they relate to occupancy. The final phase of the study will use actual data from the opening of the southbound HOV lane to determine the feasibility of using value pricing in the corridor. If the express lane concept proves to be viable, a number of actions would be needed before it could be implemented including a revision to the Regional Transportation Plan, specific legislation allowing for the operation of an express lane, as well as public outreach and acceptance. ■



WHO IS ACCMA?

The Alameda County Congestion Management Agency (ACCMA) is the local agency responsible for planning improvements in streets, highways, and mass transit in Alameda County. Its governing board is comprised of elected officials representing all of the local governments and major transit agencies in Alameda County.

For more information about ACCMA, please contact us at:

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Executive Director: Dennis Fay

CALTRANS HOTLINE 510/286- 5910

Call the Caltrans I-680 Sunol Grade Hotline to get current information on Sunol Grade improvements.



Northbound Improvements — continued

Alternative II proposes the same items included in the first alternative but also proposes some widening of southbound I-680.

Alternative III is the no-build alternative. This alternative creates the benchmark for impact assessment against which the other two alternatives can be compared.

Two other options have been discussed for the Sunol Grade. The first, is the operation of the new northbound HOV or carpool lane as an express lane. This concept allows carpoolers to use it for free. Additionally, it allows single occupancy vehicles to use the lane for a fee (see article on value pricing). The second option is a contra flow or “reversible” carpool lane. In this case, the new southbound HOV lane would be utilized for southbound traffic in the morning and, through the use of a movable barrier, the same lane could be used for northbound traffic during the afternoon commute. ■

The partnership includes:

- Congress Member Ellen Tauscher
- State Senator Liz Figueroa
- Assembly Member John Dutra
- Alameda County Congestion Management Agency
- Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
- Contra Costa County Transportation Authority
- Contra Costa Council
- Alameda County Transportation Authority
- Tri-Valley Business Council
- Metropolitan Transportation Commission
- Silicon Valley Manufacturer's Group
- California Transportation Commission
- California Department of Transportation
- Bay Area Council
- Fremont Chamber of Commerce

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